

# mean<sup>1</sup>

mean (mēn) *verb*

meant (mēnt) *mean·ing, means verb, transitive*

1. a. To be used to convey; denote: "*The question is,*" said Alice, "*whether you can make words mean so many different things*" (Lewis Carroll).  
b. To act as a symbol of; signify or represent: *In this poem, the budding flower means youth.*
2. To intend to convey or indicate: "*No one means all he says, and yet very few say all they mean, for words are slippery and thought is viscous*" (Henry Adams).
3. To have as a purpose or an intention; intend: *I meant to go running this morning, but I overslept.*
4. To design, intend, or destine for a certain purpose or end: *a building that was meant for storage; a student who was meant to be a scientist.*
5. To have as a consequence; bring about: *Friction means heat.*
6. To have the importance or value of: *The opinions of the critics meant nothing to him. She meant so much to me.*

*verb, intransitive*

To have intentions of a specified kind; be disposed: *She means well, despite her blunders.*

— *Idiom.*

mean business *Informal.*

To be in earnest.

[Middle English *menen*, from Old English *mænan*, to tell of.]

**Synonyms:** *mean, denote, import, signify.* The central meaning shared by these verbs is "to convey a particular idea": *what does the word serendipity mean?* Pro- may denote "earlier" or "anterior." *Philadelphia is the city of brotherly love; that is what its name imports. A crown signifies royal power.*

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